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Dear Sir or Madam

Thank you for providing me an opportunity to provide feedback on California Text book revision process. I would like to have unbiased and accurate representation of hinduism and india in the California Text books.

As a parent of child going to school in Simi Valley unified school district with background of Indian origin and practicing Hinduism, I've couple of points to make regarding the revision of history textbooks for schools in California.

First point is that replacing the name **India** by **South Asia** is unjust and destroys the identity of a large number of children from India.

Especially current suggestion of replacing India by “South Asia” is unnecessary and causes confusion and steals identity from children who are from India. Moreover, all the historical figures starting from Columbus (even prior), Vasco DaGama , Einstein etc have referred to this landmass as India. India did not come into existence in 1947 and has existed and been referred by this name for long..

For example, when British established British East India Company they referred to the entire landmass from Afghanistan to Myanmar, Tibet to Sri lanka as India and not South Asia.

Given these facts, I urge you use India in the textbooks at all locations since that is what is used in the historical documents

In addition to the above, below are **my specific comments** regarding some of the changes proposed in the text books.

EDIT 2482: "Page 213, lines 838-840:

Current text: "Brahmins, that is, priestly families, assumed authority over complex devotional rituals, but many important sages, such as Valmiki and Vyasa, were not brahmins." Suggested change: "Brahmins, that is, priestly families, assumed authority over complex devotional rituals,""

My comment:

Our traditions tells us that there are many sages (rishis as they are called) were not born in the brahmin caste.

For example well known poets of sanskrit Vyasa who compiled Vedas (also wrote Maha Bharata), Valmiki who composed Ramayana are not from the brahmin caste.

See the link below for more examples.

<http://vishalagarwal.bharatvani.org/articles/scriptures/vajrasuchika/appendixb.htm>

Therefore I demand that current text be kept as it is since it gives couple of example for this and is accurate depiction of our tradition

EDIT 2439:"Page 210, line 777:

Current text: "• How did the religion of Hinduism support individuals, rulers, and societies?"

Suggested change: "• How did the religion of Ancient India support individuals, rulers, and societies?"

My comment:

This is confusing to say the least. The ancient people of India did not have a name for their religious practices. They referred to their practices as sanatana (eternal) dharma. However after people from outside came from outside they called the people as hindus and their tradition as hinduism.

Currently the practices in place in modern India are based on the same set of principles that has been followed for thousands of years and the name given by people from outside is hinduism and hindus in Bharat and elsewhere have adopted this name.

Therefore it is wrong to use "ancient religions" and name hinduism should be used as it reflects

continuity of practices from ancient times

EDIT 2459:"Page 212, lines 819-821:

Current text: "Indian history then entered the Vedic period (ca. 1500-500 BCE), an era named for the Vedas, Sanskrit religious texts passed on for generations through a complex oral tradition."

Suggested change: "Ancient South Asia experienced a Vedic period (ca. 1500-500 BCE), named for the Vedas which were composed in Sanskrit. While Sanskrit texts, both religious and secular, continued to be produced in subsequent centuries, texts in Old Tamil also began to appear around 300 BCE, and Tamil literary production flourished during the Sangam period in South India in following centuries. Sanskrit and Tamil texts passed on for generations through a complex oral tradition.""

My comment:

#1. The suggested wording ('composed', continued to be produced etc) adds much more confusion. It ignores the fact that Vedas were passed as oral traditions.

#2. 'Continued to be produced' creates a false impression as if they were not existing before.

The text of Vedas composed in Sanskrit are the backbone for all the traditions practised in various parts of India. The principles and practices that were mentioned in Vedas have been retold in many of vernacular languages of India.

All of these are based on the original text in Sanskrit and retold in various ways.

Therefore keep the current text in the syllabus otherwise it is confusing for the children since the modification does not mention any other languages where the principles of Vedas have been retold.

EDIT 2504:"Page 214, lines 860-864:

Current text: "Many of the central practices of Hinduism today, including home and temple worship, yoga and meditation, rites of passage (samskaras), festivals, pilgrimage, respect for saints and gurus, and, above all, a profound acceptance of religious diversity, developed over this period."

Suggested change: "Many of the central practices of Hinduism today, including home and temple worship, yoga and meditation, rites of passage (samskaras), festivals, pilgrimage, and respect for saints and gurus, developed over this period."

My comment:

It is very mischievous of the department to remove the salient and important feature of the hinduism i.e. acceptance of diversity if religious principles and practices. The following quotes from vedas "ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti (truth is one and sages call it by different names" epitomised this principle during the vedic times. Therefore removing the words "a profound acceptance of religious diversity is not only mischievous, it is denial of justice to the core theme of Hindu religious practice/principle

EDIT 2536:"Page 215, lines 891-892:

Current text: "Teachers should make clear to students that this was a social and cultural structure rather than a religious belief."

Suggested change: "Teachers should make clear to students that this was a social and cultural structure as well as a religious belief."

My comment:

This change introduces bias with respect to hinduism since similar practices which were part of other religions traditions and their textbooks are not mentioned. For example, there are references to slavery in bible , unequal treatment of women in Islam are not mentioned in the same text books. This kind of topics don't belong in middle school/high school textbooks and are best left to mature college courses.

This kind of discriminatory treatment might lead to concerned parent seeking judicial intervention and thus impact the timeline of revision of textbooks. I request that the suggested change be dropped and keep the current text.

EDIT 2545:"Page 215, lines 896-897:

Current text: "They participated equally with their husbands in religious ceremonies and festival celebrations."

Suggested change: "They participated in religious ceremonies and festival celebrations, though not as equals."

My comment:

This change is specifically introducing bias against Hinduism in text book for school children. This is may also be discriminatory if the treatment of women in other world religions (women can't become priests in churches or women cannot pray with men in mosques etc). It is my experience that there are certain rituals where women takes the

lead and others men take the lead role in hinduism. There are certain activities it is forbidden for a man to do unless wife is part of the ritual. Certainly it is complicated and the does not capture the situation very well. It is better to reject the change

EDIT 2552:"Page 215, lines 912-914:

Current text: "Through the story of his life, his Hindu background, and his search for enlightenment, students may learn about his fundamental ideas: suffering, compassion, and mindfulness."

Suggested change: "Through the story of his life, and his search for enlightenment, students may learn about his fundamental ideas: suffering, compassion, and mindfulness."

My comment:

I presume this text is about learning about Gautam Budhdha. It is real irony if the Hindu background of Gautama Buddha is not mentioned. It is a historical fact that Buddhism is considered one of the darshanas (philosophy is closest english word used) and budhdha is considered as one of the ten incarnations of Vishnu in Hinduism. Delinking hindu background of Buddha for student learning about buddhism is giving a biased view to someone learning about world religions.

I sincerely thank you for allowing me to contribute to the revision process. I certainly hope that feedback from the practitioners/parents are given importance that it deserves since texts impact the worldview of a large number of children in the school who are future citizens of this great country. It also affects the the self esteem and identity of the children who are of indian origin and practice Hinduism.

I am available for any further consultation/clarifications required and as officials entrusted with bringing accurate and factual depiction of Hinduism to school text books I do hope that you will take appropriate action to address our concerns.

Thank you again

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